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AN  
ESSAY  
ON  
PERSONAL IDENTITY.

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[Price ONE SHILLING and SIX PENCE.]

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E S S A Y

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PERSONALITY.



[Price One Shilling and Six Pence.]

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PERSONAL IDENTITY,

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I N T W O P A R T S.

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"—At inquisitio atque investigatio veri, propria est hominis, qui  
" unus est rationis particeps."

CICERO.

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L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR J. ROBSON, BOOKSELLER, AT THE  
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PERSONAL IDENTITY.

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MDCCCXXX.



# ESSAY

## ON

### PERSONAL IDENTITY.

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#### INTRODUCTION.

**I**T is now a very considerable time since Mr. LOCKE's Dissertation on PERSONAL IDENTITY, as contained in his excellent *Essay concerning human understanding*, has appeared in the world.

The high estimation in which all the works of this author were immediately held, is very well known: his opinions, particularly on identity and diversity, altho' directly attacked, were shewn to great advantage by a weak opposition; and, not being refuted, were of course the more confirmed. The Bishop of Worcester, Mr. Locke's ready antagonist, founded most of his arguments on erroneous, or mistaken principles: this could not escape the

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notice

notice of his discerning opponent: the foundation, therefore, being immediately undermined, the whole superstructure of objections fell to the ground.

These circumstances I had long since fully considered; but, after an attentive examination of both Mr. LOCKE's positions, and the Bishop's exceptions, it appeared to me, that altho' the latter were wrong, it did not certainly follow that the former were right: I imagined, also, that several of Mr. LOCKE's arguments, which seemed most consonant to reason and common sense, were deduced only from specious appearances of them. — Influenced then by these motives, I resolved, however bold the attempt, to venture an opposition.

And here I am sensible, that I am in danger of being censured, as guilty of either folly, or presumption, in attempting to disprove doctrines doubly confirmed — by prescription, and the authority of a deservedly great name. But, to objections like these, I might easily reply (altho' not pretending to draw the least parallel), had Mr. LOCKE, and other eminent moderns, been  
 swayed



swayed by such narrow considerations, the admirable Essay on the understanding had never appeared: truth still had lain in a well; and ARISTOTLE have reigned paramount.

It is well known, that the remotest antiquity has held opinions which after-time has proved erroneous; and that the wisest of men have also often been deceived: It is truth, therefore, which is mightier than all things, and should ever prevail, that we ought to view in all our disquisitions, and look to as their only desirable end: and of this, not PLATO or SENECA, but each man himself should be judge for himself. It was in obsequience, as I thought, to this maxim, that I first determined to lay the following remarks before the public, in some kind of opposition to the opinion of so great a reasoner as was the ever memorable LOCKE. Let this then be for an excuse, that the discovery of truth was my design: let the reader candidly consider the arguments offered, and, if he find occasion, oblige the Author by pointing out any errors he may discover.

— *Si quid novisti rectius istis,*

*Candidus imperti; si non; his utere mecum.*

But

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But

But I am conscious that I have not yet sufficiently apologized for all that may be alledged against me: many, doubtless, will be ready to object, that Dr. WATTS has, long since, remarked upon Mr. LOCKE's opinions concerning identity; and that an attempt to better what he has advanced, discovers too great presumption. I believe, indeed, I must here in some measure plead guilty, and confess ingenuously, that after an attentive consideration of what this author has written, I could not perceive that he had much anticipated what I had to offer, he having apparently designed only a cursory consideration of the subject: I therefore resolved still to persist in my undertaking. Whether I was right or not, in this my judgment, and following conduct, the reader will easily determine; he will, however, certainly perceive, that Dr. WATTS has not shewn *wherein* lies the error of Mr. LOCKE's scheme; that he has only remarked upon the improbability of it, and said nothing concerning its impossibility; which is, if I mistake not, evinced in the course of the following essay.

And, here, it may not be impertinent to apologize also to some, who, with me having a  
very



very great esteem for Mr. LOCKE, may think several expressions I shall be obliged to use, rather harsh and disrespectful: let all such remember, that the dispute is not with the MAN, but the ARGUMENTS. If any opinion, altho' begotten and nurtured by ever so eminent an author, be proved inconsistent, or in its consequences absurd, it is certainly ill-timed politeness to avoid terming it so, out of deference to the authority of a name. At least, truth demands greater respect than even a LOCKE: and if, whilst I differ from the latter, I should only imagine I follow the former, yet will my good intentions be no inconsiderable excuse to the candid reader.

It remains yet to say something concerning the nature of that debate into which we are about entering. The subject of it is—PERSONAL IDENTITY: and the enquiry—what is essential to, and and the sole constituent of this most important sameness. It must be evident then, to every one who considers with but a little attention, that we are not to dispute concerning a mere metaphysical nicety, or speculative, abstracted hypothesis: but—that the truth, of which we are now in quest, is of such importance, that, on a right deter-

determination of it, depend very interesting consequences.

It is not in our *human*, so properly as in our *personal* capacity, that we ourselves are accountable: and certainly, every one must be solicitous to know, with as much precision as possible, how, and in what light he himself shall finally be cognizable. I pretend not to say, that a right, or wrong, or any particular determination concerning PERSONAL IDENTITY, will cause a real difference in a man's future state; far the greater part of the world, perhaps, being theoretically unacquainted with the subject: but it is very certain, if a false constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY be assumed, that the consequences, fairly deducible from thence, will either be directly contradictory to common sense and reason, or absolutely repugnant to what are deemed established principles of divine, as well as human justice and equity, as shall be hereafter fully evinced. On these accounts, therefore, just ideas of PERSONAL IDENTITY, and of its constituent, are highly important.

It seems strange, indeed, that in this enlightened  
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ened age, when the learned not only indefatigably labour to discover what distinguishes one species of animals from another, but extend their attention even to the vegetable and mineral worlds; studious to ascertain the specific distinctions of the innumerable kinds of herbs which overspread, and fossils which are contained in the bowels of this our earth: it seems strange, I say, that in such an age of knowledge, and curious research, Man should only have neglected that noblest part of creation, to which he himself more peculiarly belongs. Assisted by art, we even discover worlds impervious to ordinary sight; and yet, in a great measure, forget that most dignified order of Beings, which, under the general denomination of Persons, comprehends all accountable, or moral agents, and amongst the rest MAN. We will not, indeed, easily take for granted a supposed specific difference of stones and minerals; but on the subject of PERSONAL IDENTITY, as to what distinguishes one intelligent, rational Being from another, we are readily contented with any hypothesis. The truth is, our knowledge of spirits, and particularly of this relation of them, is attended with difficulty; and we do not think it by any means worthy of the care and  
attention

attention that we bestow on mere inanimate matter. But, I hope, a proper consideration will shew, at least, the comparative importance of disquisitions on this head; and also engage a candid perusal of the following small treatise: the design of which is, to consider the real evidence of a noted and generally established opinion concerning the constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY: and, if this be found deficient, to attempt a discovery of some true criterion, or distinguishing property, which may sufficiently determine the individuation of spiritual Beings.

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# OF PERSONAL IDENTITY.

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## PART I.

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*An Enquiry, whether the same Consciousness be essential to, or the sole Constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY.*

SECT. I. **A**S I have now, cursorily, premised the occasion and general design of the following Essay, it would be proper next to consider, with some precision, the meaning of the most important terms I shall make use of: an explication of these being of primary importance in every debate: in the present, indeed, there appears to be but one which can admit a possibility of mistake as to its signification, and that is the word

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*Person:*

*Person*: in order then to elucidate what I think the proper intent of this, it will be necessary to consider the respective definitions of it, by the two most considerable authors who have written on the subject of PERSONAL IDENTITY.

SECT. II. And first, Dr. WATTS supposes the ~~complete sense of~~ *Person* to be, the same Spirit united to the same Body. Here I am, indeed, obliged to differ widely from him: it is evident, from even the general use of the word *Person*, that Body is not an essential part of the idea to which it is applied; for God, angels, and separate Spirits are, I think, universally understood to be proper and complete Persons: but were it otherwise, the common use of the word in this case matters not; we, in the present dispute, considering *Person*, not as solely to be attributed to the human soul, but as signifying an universal idea, applicable to moral agents in general. Mr. LOCKE's definition of *Person* therefore, *Ch. 27. §. 19.* to wit, that it is "a thinking, intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places," is, in



the first part of it, very just, to wit, in Person's being a thinking, intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection; but if by the latter part of it be meant, that a person can ALWAYS consider itself as itself, the same in different times and places, it appears to be, in some degree, a begging of the question. It should first, I conceive, have been proved, that the same consciousness does constitute PERSONAL IDENTITY.

SECT. III. It seems, indeed, that both Mr. LOCKE and Dr. WATTS have, in their definitions of Person, in some measure, taken for granted what they afterwards endeavoured to establish concerning it. Thus Mr. LOCKE, as has been already observed, appears to suppose, in his definition of Person, that the same consciousness does constitute its identity. Dr. WATTS, on the contrary, in his determination of Person, expressly asserts, that the same consciousness does not constitute its identity; *see Phil. Ess. page 301.* "I think, therefore, that the word Person implies one thinking being, one intelligent substance, which is always the same, whether it be, or be not mindful of its own actions in different times and places."——But this method

method of determining a dispute *a priori*, is, I believe, convincing but to a very few: I shall therefore, as much as possible, avoid it; and, for that purpose, explain Person (according to the first part of Mr. LOCKE's definition) to mean only a thinking, intelligent Being. This Being, also, we shall more peculiarly consider in the light of a moral agent; or as deserving reward or punishment, praise or blame. And here it is very evident, that if either Mr. LOCKE's, Dr. WATTS's, or the present definition be just, matter can by no means, in any modification, enter into the proper and essential idea of a person: for, whether thought may be superadded to it, or not, it is very certain, that length, breadth, and depth, however varied, or however connected, cannot possibly, as such, necessarily imply either reason or reflection, merit or demerit. We must observe next, that Person is a very general idea, comprehending the whole spiritual world, and, only as a particular species, the souls of men. However, as this Essay respects, chiefly, our own personal Identity, the words *Soul* and *Person* will, in many cases, be synonymous, and therefore be indiscriminately used.



SECT. IV. Having now endeavoured to determine the signification of Person, we proceed directly to consider Mr. LOCKE's opinion concerning the constituent of its identity. This learned author, in the 27th chapter of his Essay, affirms, and endeavours to prove, that the same consciousness, or, as he himself defines it, "a  
 "present representation of a past action," is essential to, and the sole constituent of personal Identity. Let us, first, then see how this position agrees with common sense, and the general opinion of mankind: *e. g.* Should any one have committed a crime seven years ago; and, to day, have lost all remembrance of it, nor have the least consciousness of such a fact remaining; would it not, nevertheless, be his action? or would his having forgotten that deed render him a different person, and not accountable in equity for it?—Objections of this kind Mr. LOCKE endeavours to refute §. 20. by supposing, that in such cases one would still be the same Man, altho' not the same Person. But let us consider whither this will lead us: It is certain, and proved by experience, that in the course of many, if not all men's lives, who arrive at the age of maturity, various sins are committed

mitted by them, both in thought and deed, which afterwards they entirely forget: the same man, therefore, entirely losing, as he necessarily must, at different times, the consciousness of many of his past actions, becomes as many different persons. So that, according to this supposition, the same Being, who was the Apostle PAUL, may now be both in Heaven and Hell; one of his persons, perhaps, having repented of his misdeeds, and another not.—Nay, according to the position, this *must* be the case: for the man PAUL having, undoubtedly, many thoughts before his conversion, of which he was never conscious after it, must have been, in those different parts of his life, different persons: and as many of these persons could have existed only in an unregenerated condition, unless we suppose another state of probation besides this, they must have been doomed to misery, whilst others of the persons of the same man PAUL enjoyed an ever-during happiness. But of the probability or propriety of this let common sense have the decision.

SECT. V. Again, should one man have perpetrated a murder, or any other crime; and have entirely forgotten it; whilst another has a consciousness



ness of the deed imprinted on his mind, would that consciousness render the latter man the same person that committed the sin, and accountable for it, whilst the former should be cleared by his forgetfulness? According to Mr. LOCKE's position, this would be the case; see also §. 13. But it is well known, that madmen often declare, and by their actions prove, that they really believe themselves to have been persons who existed many ages before, and are conscious to themselves of particular actions which they have heard attributed to those persons.—Mr. LOCKE also mentions an instance of a very rational man, who fancied his soul to have been that of SOCRATES: Let us suppose (which is as likely to happen) that any one should imagine himself to be the person who performed some actions of SOCRATES, he would then be the same person with SOCRATES; accountable for his faults, and praiseworthy for his meritorious deeds. But is it reasonable to suppose, that God would unite to the same body many different persons, or to the same person several different bodies? Is not this disagreeable to our very form, the simplicity nature observes in all her works, and the so strict union of our bodies and souls during life?

SECT. VI. But it may not be amiss, here, to take notice of Dr. WATTS's answer to Mr. LOCKE on this subject; *see Phil. Ess. Essay 12. §. 7*. The Doctor, in this place, considering some difficulties attending Mr. LOCKE's scheme of the same consciousness, expresses himself thus: "He (*i. e.* " Mr. LOCKE) seems to allow, that according to " his description of PERSONAL IDENTITY, two different men may be one and the same person; " for in his 13th and 14th sections, as well as in " other parts of this chapter, he grants that a " different spirit, created long after, may possibly have the consciousness of actions done by a " spirit existent many ages before, imprest upon it: by this means the Mayor of *Queenborough* might suppose his soul had been the " soul of SOCRATES, as §. 19. and then this " latter soul or spirit, or this man, becomes the " same person with the former: and thus SOCRATES and the Mayor of *Queenborough* become " one person." Dr. WATTS having thus mentioned Mr. LOCKE's opinion, proceeds to remark upon it in the following manner: " But I deny " this to be proper conscious remembrance, 'tis " only a delusive impression on the mind or fancy, " imitating the act of memory; 'tis a strong belief



" lief of what is false: and can such a fren-  
 " zy be sufficient to turn two men into one  
 " person? Must DOMITIAN, &c. &c." Here it  
 is evident, that the sole reason Dr. WATTS  
 assigns, why the Mayor of *Queenborough*, in this  
 case, is not the same with SOCRATES, or DOMI-  
 TIAN the same with every soldier in his army, is,  
 that the consciousness here spoken of is not pro-  
 per conscious remembrance: this seems therefore  
 to imply, that if the Mayor of *Queenborough* could  
 possibly have a proper consciousness that his soul  
 was the same with that of SOCRATES; or that he  
 was the same person who performed some actions  
 attributed to SOCRATES, that then he would be-  
 come the same person with SOCRATES: and so it  
 follows, that proper conscious remembrance does,  
 in reality, constitute PERSONAL IDENTITY. Dr.  
 WATTS, therefore, instead of refuting, does  
 by his answer rather confirm Mr. LOCKE's gene-  
 ral position. But there appears no necessity for  
 our having recourse to this distinction of consci-  
 ousness; there are difficulties enough conse-  
 quent from the opinion, that the same conscious-  
 ness, *i. e.* " a present representation of a past  
 " action," constitutes PERSONAL IDENTITY; and  
 it matters not, neither in many cases perhaps  
 could it be determined, whether this " present

“representation” should be supposed proper or improper conscious remembrance.

SECT. VII. We have now, cursorily, seen how Mr. LOCKE’s position agrees with common sense; and also taken notice of Dr. WATTS’s remark; we may next observe, that a considerable argument against the same consciousness, as the constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY, can be drawn from analogy.

The same consciousness, as Mr. LOCKE allows, and as must be evident to every one, is in its own nature communicable, that is, may be transferred from one person to another. But we observe the Identity of all other things, with which we are acquainted, to depend upon some incommunicable property or attribute. Thus, first, of inanimate substances, what constitutes their Identity is a continuation of existence in the same form; the Identity of vegetables also depends upon a continuation of the same vegetable life; and the Identity of animals is, in like manner, determined by the same life uninterruptedly continued. All these, it is evident, are unalienable properties; and is it not reasonable that

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**PERSONAL IDENTITY** (the certain distinction of which is of such infinitely superior importance) should likewise depend upon, or be constituted by something in its own nature absolutely incommunicable?

**SECT. VIII.** It seems, indeed, strange to affirm, that the same consciousness, that is, “a present representation of a past action,” is essential to the Identity of a person; and yet to allow that it is, in its own nature, communicable. If any property or action be essential to a Being, then it is a part of the essence of that Being: to affirm, therefore, that the same consciousness is essential to a person, and yet to allow that it may be communicated from one to another, is to affirm, that an essential part of a thinking Being, or a Spirit, may be taken from it, and made an essential part of another Spirit: but this, every one must perceive, is absolutely inconsistent with the nature of either simple or unextended Beings; and yet it will naturally follow, the same consciousness being supposed essential to **PERSONAL IDENTITY**.

**SECT. IX.**

SECT. IX. Consciousness, therefore, does not appear to be that, wherein PERSONAL IDENTITY consists; but only that, whereby we are sensible to ourselves of this PERSONAL IDENTITY. That this is the case, is manifestly proved, even by common sense and opinion. Let us suppose that any man had, six hours ago, entirely forgotten a particular work he did yesterday: let him also, at this time, remember, or again become conscious of the performance of that action; will he not then as certainly believe, that he was as much the same person, who performed that action six hours since, when he had entirely forgotten it, as he is now when he perfectly remembers it? I appeal to the experience of any man for the truth of this. It is evident, therefore, that every one implicitly supposes, that there is something else besides the same consciousness on which his Identity depends; and that the same consciousness is only that whereby he himself becomes sensible of this Identity. The difference is manifest; it is one thing to have great knowledge, virtue, learning, &c. and another, to be conscious of our possessing those qualifications. That these, *viz.* possessing, and knowing that we possess, are separable, is also, I think, very evident. And the  
 case



case appears to be similar with the real constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY and the same consciousness. The reason, therefore, of the Apostle's saying, that at the great day, when every one "shall receive according to his doings, the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open," was not to inform us (as Mr. LOCKE seems to suppose §. 26.) that it would impeach God's justice to punish a person for any crime he had committed, even altho' he should not be conscious of it; but to teach us, that the justice of God would appear to the guilty themselves in their condemnation; which, unless they were conscious to themselves of their crimes, could not be.

Every one must see that there is a difference between the justice of a punishment, and the criminal's sensibility of that justice. Does not Mr. LOCKE's mistake appear to arise from his not making this distinction? see §. 10. "For it being  
 "the same consciousness that makes a man be  
 " *himself to himself*, PERSONAL IDENTITY depends  
 "on that only, whether it be annexed only to  
 "one individual substance, or can be continued  
 "in a succession of several substances. For as  
 "far as any intelligent Being can repeat the idea  
 " of

“ of any past action, so far it is the same personal  
 “ self. For it is by the consciousness it has of its  
 “ present thoughts and actions that it is *self* to  
 “ *itself* now, and so will be the *same self* as far as  
 “ the same consciousness can extend to actions  
 “ past, or to come, &c.”——The whole of this,  
 and what follows, can only prove, that consciousness  
 is necessary to make a man *himself to himself*;  
 which is most certain, and readily acknowledged.  
 But this does not prove, that the same consciousness  
 constitutes PERSONAL IDENTITY, or that any one  
 is not accountable for those actions of which he is  
 not conscious. It only shews, that this consciousness  
 is necessary in order to convince any person  
 himself, that he is really the same who committed  
 those actions for which he is rewarded or punished;  
 and does not prove, that he would be a  
 different person from him who committed those  
 actions, even altho’ he were not conscious of  
 them. See also §. 16, &c.

SECT. X. What has been hitherto advanced  
 concerning the absurdity of the doctrine of consciousness,  
 has been chiefly on the supposition,  
 that (allowing it to be true) PERSONAL IDENTITY  
 would be terminated by an absolute loss in the  
 memory



memory of past transactions. But if it be the same consciousness alone, as Mr. LOCKE maintains, that constitutes PERSONAL IDENTITY, then, whenever that is absent, it is manifest a person is no longer the same: for, when what is essential to, and the sole constituent of any thing, is absent, that thing must necessarily be at an end. If, therefore, a man yesterday blasphemed, and to-day forgot it, he is to-day a different person, and not answerable in equity for that sin; but, should he remember it to-morrow, he becomes then the same who committed the crime, and justly accountable for it. It is impossible, also, for the mind of man to be conscious even once, much less continually, of all the actions, &c. of its past existence. The succession of new thoughts and ideas is likewise perpetual. Here then is a change rapid as light; one and the same man must necessarily be innumerable different persons. Many then of our first parents' persons must have stood, as well as others fell: original rectitude, therefore, is as much our due as original sin. It is the general belief of mankind also, that our bodies shall arise at the resurrection, and again be united to our souls or persons; but to which of our persons is this body to be united,

united, since some of them must be in heaven, and others in hell? There is a necessity for one body to be in two places at the same time—the belief of which requires strong faith.

SECT. XI. If the least circumstance be omitted, or suffer the most trivial alteration in recollection of any action or thought, it also makes a difference of persons, consciousness alone being supposed to constitute PERSONAL IDENTITY. For, if the “present representation” of them be wanting, I am not now the same person who was once conscious of them. All the little accidents of our life, therefore, will be important enough to raise up new persons, according to this scheme. I should be glad to know then—from any zealot for the same consciousness, whether NEBUCHADNEZZAR, during the whole time of his transformation, had continually, and together, in his mind the remembrance of all the evil actions for which he was punished: I believe no one will affirm he had, since, if so, his faculties must have been almost inconceivably exalted at the degradation of his body—the contrary to which is expressly affirmed. But, if there were the least intermission in, or cessation of his consciousness,



sciousness, he must have been a different person from him who committed those actions, and, therefore, unjustly punished for them; which, also, I imagine, no one will maintain.

SECT. XII. If the same consciousness be essential to PERSONAL IDENTITY, and its sole constituent, it is necessary, in order to prevent a plurality of persons in the same soul, even after death, that its powers, at its transition from this life to the next, should be instantaneously, and so prodigiously encreased, as that it should, at one view, or at once, and that continually and forever, be conscious of all the actions and thoughts of its past and present existence: a property, perhaps, of the Deity alone; and, at least, directly contrary to the progressive nature of our souls, and that gradual increase of their powers we are reasonably to expect. It is necessary, therefore, either to maintain this extravagant consequence, or to affirm, that the same soul may, nay, must form a plurality of persons even in the next world; or, finally, to acknowledge, that the same consciousness is not the sole constituent of, nor essential to PERSONAL IDENTITY.

SECT. XIII. It would have appeared strange, even to Mr. LOCKE, should any one, observing his attention fixed on some other subject, have affirmed, that he was not the person who was the author of the Essay on the human understanding; and yet, on perceiving afterwards, by some action, his recollection and consciousness of that occurrence of his life, confess that, in consequence of that remembrance, he did again become the same person. These so opposite assertions would, however, be strictly true, Mr. LOCKE's position being allowed,

SECT. XIV. But, perhaps, it may be urged, in answer to the last preceding objections, that Mr. LOCKE, in maintaining the same consciousness to be essential to, and the sole constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY, did not mean, that, in order to constitute a person the same at two different times, there was always required the actual or present consciousness of past actions and thoughts; from which supposition so many gross absurdities would unavoidably follow

Let us therefore briefly view the state of this matter.

What



What then is to be understood by the same consciousness as essential to PERSONAL IDENTITY? Is it by the *present* act, or by any *future* act of it, that we are made the same now? Mr. LOCKE evidently declares it to be the former, when he says, it is that by which a man is "himself to himself;" for it is manifest, that I am not *now* to myself the same self that I was when I preformed a particular action last year, by any *future* remembrance of that action. It follows then, that if I be not now "the same self to myself," that I was at any one time last year, I now want that consciousness, of which Mr. LOCKE speaks, and am now a different person from what I was at that time, however I may hereafter recollect the action, and so become the same. And from this it appears, that Mr. LOCKE understood, by consciousness, the present act; which is also further proved in express terms, §. 16. "so that "whatever *has* the consciousness of *present* and "past actions, is the same person to whom "they both belong, &c."—In §. 13. also, Mr. LOCKE defines the same consciousness to be "but a *present* representation of a past action." Could he more expressly have asserted what we here endeavour to prove? Mr. LOCKE, not only in

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the above adduced passages, but every where allows, that the consciousness of present actions is also included in that consciousness which constitutes PERSONAL IDENTITY; it is manifest, therefore, that the act which makes us now the same that we were at any preceding time, is a present act, or an act exerted at this very time, since part of it is a consciousness of actions now present. If the same consciousness then be but “a present representation of a past action,” as before quoted, whenever that PRESENT representation of a past action is wanting, it is manifest that the same consciousness, which constitutes a person the same with the one who performed that particular action, is also wanting. The state of this case does indeed appear to be very plain. What is it, according to Mr. LOCKE, that solely constitutes PERSONAL IDENTITY? The answer is, the same consciousness. And what is the same consciousness? His own words are, “a *present* representation of a past action.” *Whenever*, therefore, we have not this present representation of a past action, PERSONAL IDENTITY, according to Mr. LOCKE, certainly ceases. And thus all the before adduced objections, against the position of the same consciousness, remain in full force.

SECT. XV.



SECT. XV. Should any now, therefore, maintain that he is the same person to-day that he was yesterday, solely, because he shall to-morrow, or some time hence, recollect the actions he performed then, *i. e.* yesterday, he must entirely reject Mr. LOCKE's definition of consciousness, to wit, that it is a "present representation of any thing past," and substitute in it its stead, the words *future* representation. He must assert, that that which does not exist, nay, which never did exist, exerts a casual influence; and that, should it please God, a thousand years hence, to give to the souls of the present kings of *Great Britain* and *Prussia* the same consciousness, (which Mr. LOCKE, in substance, allows to be possible) they would, in consequence of that consciousness, to be given them a thousand years hence, be now, at this instant, the same person, and the one accountable for all the actions of the other. Nay, any one who would maintain this opinion, must allow it possible for all the sons of ADAM to be now but one person; and grant that there is no certain distinction between CAIN and the Apostle PAUL. — Should it then be enquired, what it is that makes a person the same to-day that he was when he performed any particular action

action yesterday ; it would evidently be an absurd answer to affirm, that it is some future remembrance of that action ; that our present Identity depends on what, at present, is not in existence ; that we are the same to-day that we were yesterday ; and yet, that the only thing which makes us now the same, the sole constituent of that sameness, has not, nor ever has had Being. It is certainly directly contrary to reason, and common sense, to suppose an effect to exist before its cause ; or any thing now to be, when what is essential to it, and its sole constituent, now is not. But there need not many words here ; it is very evident, that by the same consciousness must either be meant an actual consciousness, or a *power* of causing that consciousness (of which immediately), OR NOTHING AT ALL,

SECT. XVI. Here, then, perhaps some one taking occasion from what Mr. LOCKE says, §. 10. *viz.* “ For as far as any intelligent Being can repeat the idea of any past action, with the same consciousness it had of it at first, and with the same consciousness it has of any present action ; so far it is the same personal self ; ” some one, I say, taking occasion from this paragraph, may suppose,



suppose, that by the same consciousness is meant a POWER in the Soul of causing that consciousness of past actions, whether exerted or not, and that PERSONAL IDENTITY only then ceases when this POWER is wanting. But, not to remark that this supposition is directly contrary to Mr. LOCKE's express definition, and absolutely foreign to the very meaning of the words, "the same consciousness," it will but little help the cause for several reasons.

*1st*, It is impossible for the mind of man, in its present state, to conceive of many things at once: on this account, therefore, there must be innumerable past thoughts and actions that it *cannot*, at any one time, repeat; and so a change must be thereby continually caused in PERSONAL IDENTITY.

*2dly*, It is well known that we often endeavour, to the utmost of our power, to recollect particular actions or occurrences that we once performed, or were conscious of, and find ourselves totally unable to do it—another most fruitful source of diversity!—and, as I believe no one was ever known *able*, in manhood, to recollect the  
the

the thoughts, &c. which he had when in perfect infancy, it follows also, that no man is, nor ever was there any one, the same as to Person in the two states of infancy and manhood,

3dly, We often afterwards can repeat the ideas of those particular actions, &c. which before we endeavoured in vain to recollect, and thus, again, become different persons from what we were when *unable* to procure that remembrance we sought—a third and most universal cause of personal change. I, therefore, being yesterday one Person; last night, a different one; and to day, again, the same that I was yesterday; it would be something curious to know what became of this person I now am, in the space between yesterday and to-day. It must either have been annihilated, or have wandered to some other state.

4thly, This supposition, that a power of causing the same consciousness is the sole constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY, would involve us in a direct contradiction; and make it possible for one thing, at the same time, to be, and not to be, the same with another thing; as shall be hereafter fully evinced.



SECT. XVII. Thus have I somewhat diffusively proved, that all, who maintain the same consciousness to be essential to PERSONAL IDENTITY, must define it the PRESENT ACT ; or, which is the same thing, suppose, that, whenever the actual consciousness of any past action is absent, PERSONAL IDENTITY ceases :——this I have been the more large in evincing, because, altho' it is immediately consequent from some, and evidently contained in others, of Mr. LOCKE's express assertions ; yet does he every where seem to overlook it, as well as the long train of insuperable difficulties, with which it is necessarily attended.

——We will just now consider what has been said on this head, in a more concise, and, therefore, perhaps more perspicuous manner. The same consciousness, *i. e.* “ a present representation of a “ past action” is supposed essential to, and the sole constituent of, PERSONAL IDENTITY. —— It is manifest then, that this “ present representation” can in nowise affect or cause PERSONAL IDENTITY, whilst itself is not in existence ; for nothing is nothing, and, by nothing, nothing can be caused or effected : whilst, therefore, this present representation exists, PERSONAL IDENTITY exists ; but the present representation can have no

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influence

influence before it begins, or after it ceases, to exist ; **PERSONAL IDENTITY**, therefore, only exists whilst there is an actual representation, and ceases to be whenever this is absent.

**SECT. XVIII.** On the whole, therefore, it most evidently follows, that all, who maintain the same consciousness to be the the sole constituent of, or essential to, **PERSONAL IDENTITY**, must of course define it the **PRESENT ACT**. All the absurdities before mentioned, as flowing from this opinion, are, therefore, indubitably proved ; and how great are they ! a change of persons as continual and swift, as is the succession of new thoughts in the soul ; a change as rapid as thought itself. In consequence of this, there must be an entire end of all moral obligation ; no one being bound in gratitude, because one person has conferred a favour on him, to acknowledge or return it to a different person, altho' the same man with his benefactor ; the justice of rewards and punishments, of debts, of gratitude, &c. &c. entirely depending upon **PERSONAL IDENTITY**.

**SECT. XIX.** But, to terminate the dispute, there can now be proved, in the doctrine of the  
same



same consciousness, an evident inconsistency and absolute contradiction. For, it being supposed, that the present act of consciousness alone constitutes PERSONAL IDENTITY, and (what is self evident) that the sole constituent, or an essential part of any thing being absent, that thing, necessarily, entirely ceases, the following will be the consequences.

SECT. XX. *First*, any man, not being conscious this instant of what he did an hour ago, becomes absolutely, to all intents, a different person from him who performed any action then; as much a different person as any other man a thousand miles removed; since, according to Mr. LOCKE, the sameness of the thinking substance has nothing to do with PERSONAL IDENTITY, but the same consciousness alone.

Every one, now, must easily conceive, that it would be extremely unjust for one person to be made conscious of any action of another person a thousand miles distant, and thereby to become the same person with him, and accountable for his deeds. This Mr. LOCKE himself allows, when he says (querying whether one intellectual substance may not have repre-

sented to it, as done by itself, what it never did,  
 and was perhaps done by some other agent) “ that  
 “ this is never so, will by us, until we have  
 “ clearer views of the nature of thinking sub-  
 “ stances, be best resolved into the goodness of  
 “ God ; who, as far as the happiness or misery  
 “ of any of his sensible creatures is concerned  
 “ in it, will not, by a FATAL ERROR of theirs,  
 “ transfer from one to another that consciof-  
 “ ness which draws reward or punishment with  
 “ it.” Thus it is by all allowed, that it would  
 be unjust for one person to be made conscious of  
 the actions of another at a great distance. But  
 it follows from Mr. LOCKE’s position, as has  
 just been shewn, that I, the same man who did  
 any thing an hour ago, and do not now recollect  
 it, am as really a different person from the one  
 who performed that action, as is the person a  
 thousand miles removed. It is, therefore, as  
 unjust that I should be made conscious of that  
 action, as that he should.—But we know that  
 this is continually the case, to wit, that we are  
 made conscious of past transactions, of which we  
 had before lost the remembrance. We this  
 minute forget an action, and the next again re-  
 collect it ; by which one person becomes con-  
 scious



scious of the deeds of another; and this continual forgetting, and recollecting, arises from the very nature of our minds, which cannot view at once all their past acts. This matter, therefore, seems reduced to a point; and the question to be, what indeed cannot be a *question*, Whether the ever-blessed Deity would continually deal thus hardly with his creatures.

SECT. XXI. *2dly*, It is self evident, that if I be now the same person that I was yesterday, and was yesterday the same person which I was the preceding day, that I am now the same person that I was that day. But, according to the scheme of the same consciousness, it is possible that the contrary of this may, nay, more than probable, that it continually will be the case. For, if I yesterday were conscious of any action I performed the day before, then, according to Mr. Locke, I was the same person yesterday that I was the preceding day. But, if I again become conscious to day of my having performed that action, yet without any remembrance of my having recollected it yesterday, I then, in consequence of that consciousness, become the same  
person

person who performed that action, but not the same who recollected it yesterday, altho' these two were the same by the supposition; which is inconsistent, and directly contrary to a well known action. And here it must be remarked (as referred to in the fourth reason against the supposition, that a POWER of causing consciousness, was the sole constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY) that the prior absurdity, and this last mentioned contradiction, will equally follow, if, instead of the words, *the same consciousness*, be substituted a POWER of causing that consciousness.

SECT. XXII. We may indeed, to preclude all doubt, add another convincing argument against the same consciousness, as the constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY, and this taken from a general predicable of Being, and equally op-pugning the scheme of a POWER of causing consciousness. If any Being be once annihilated, or at an end, it cannot again be created the same that it was before: this is most evident, since otherwise the same thing might have two beginnings of existence—a direct contradiction: see Mr. LOCKE, chap. 27. §. 1. But this would at least be possible, the same consciousness being supposed



supposed the constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY. For, if the person of the man PAUL, seventeen hundred years since, had been annihilated, and to-day a person be created, to whom is given the same consciousness of some particular actions, which the person PAUL did, the person, created to-day, would then be the same with PAUL, the one created above seventeen hundred years since; and so the same person would have two beginnings of existence, which is absurd and impossible; as impossible as that one should be two, or two—one.

SECT. XXIII. Again, we may yet further prove the inconsistency of this doctrine, of the same consciousness, after a different manner.

It is evidently necessary, that what constitutes the IDENTITY of any Being should be all that is necessary to constitute it the Being which it is; and, therefore, *that it should be ever with it.* Let us then see how the same consciousness will endure this test as the constituent of the IDENTITY of a person. Suppose a Being at this instant to begin to exist, and to continue in existence until seven years hence. Let us also imagine this  
Being

Being to think uninterruptedly during this space; to have an entire freedom of will; and good and evil thoughts in the same manner that we have them. No one, I conceive, will then deny that this Being is properly a person: But let us suppose, that this person never once, during its existence, recollects any of its past thoughts; it will then never once have the same consciousness, which, as Mr. LOCKE asserts, constitutes PERSONAL IDENTITY. The same consciousness is, therefore, so far from being necessarily, constantly present with persons, that there may be a person, which, during its whole existence, never once had it: it is, therefore, not only improbable, but impossible, that the same consciousness should constitute the IDENTITY of a person; since it is, as such, wholly unessential to personality, as much so as matter itself.

SECT. XXIV. Mr. LOCKE's doctrine, concerning PERSONAL IDENTITY, is now, I think, sufficiently refuted: however, it may not be amiss, for the sake of clear evidence, cursorily to consider some more of the arguments adduced by this learned author in defence of his opinion. The first and principal of these, and indeed the foundation



foundation of his doctrine, appears to me to be a certain position, which seems to have been mistaken for a first principle, and as such laid down by Mr. LOCKE, and, in a great measure, by Dr. WATTS. They supposed, because we are so certain of our present Identity, or that we are now ourselves, that this very certainty must be what makes us now ourselves; see Mr. LOCKE's ninth section, and Dr. WATTS's Phil. Essays, *Ess.* 12. §. 7. where he says, "there is no need of debating the point about a man's being the same person with himself at the present time, because a man's own present consciousness will secure to him his own PERSONAL IDENTITY, altho', perhaps, it will not confine it to himself alone, &c." From this principle, to wit, that a man's own consciousness is what secures his present Identity, Mr. LOCKE very justly inferred, that a similar perception or certainty in us, is what makes us now the same that we were at any past time. The premise to this conclusion Mr. LOCKE probably took from DES CARTES's so famous—"I think, therefore I am;" which he might have understood to mean, I am conscious of my being myself, and on that account

count alone am I myself. However, from whence soever the opinion be taken, it is by no means self-evident, and what has been proved concerning the same consciousness, to wit, that it is only the sign, and not the constituent of **PERSONAL IDENTITY**, is equally applicable to this consciousness; for, as the same consciousness is the sign, by which we perceive ourselves the same now that we were some time past, so that this “present consciousness” is the sign by which, if I may so express it, we perceive ourselves the same now that we are now; the same consciousness and this consciousness, therefore, are of the same nature, only the one has relation to the present time considered with respect to itself, and the other—to the present time considered with respect to the past. All the arguments we brought, therefore, against this position’s natural consequence (to wit, that the same consciousness constitutes **PERSONAL IDENTITY**) are equally valid against the position itself; for, if any conclusion be justly deduced, and, at the same time, proved absurd, the principles from which it is inferred must necessarily be false. But it is evident that this conclusion is justly deduced; for if a consciousness of our being ourselves be supposed to make us so now, it  
will



will certainly follow that the same consciousness must constitute us the same now that we were at any former time; since, if it be a consciousness of our being ourselves that makes us so, it must evidently be this consciousness, extended to times past, that makes the same self now, and then; for, in both cases, it is a consciousness of sameness that is supposed solely and equally to constitute sameness. But it has been, I think, fully proved, that it is not a consciousness of Identity which makes us the same now that we were at any past time; it follows, therefore, that it is not a consciousness of our being now ourselves, that makes us so, or constitutes present self. Having thus considered what I think one of the most specious, and seemingly irrefragable arguments that can be offered in defence of Mr. LOCKE's position, we proceed to the next or tenth section.

SECT. XXV. And, here, Mr. LOCKE, having observed that it is consciousness alone, and not IDENTITY of substance, which constitutes PERSONAL IDENTITY, says §. II. "that of this we  
" have some kind of evidence in our very bodies,  
all

"all whose particles, whilst vitally united to  
 "this same conscious self, so that we feel when  
 "they are touched, &c. are a part of ourselves,  
 "i. e. of our thinking, conscious selves." It  
 might as well, I imagine, have been asserted,  
 that those particles were a part of our souls,  
 since they are also vitally united to them, so that  
 we feel when they are touched, &c. But Mr.  
 LOCKE proceeds: "thus we see the substance,  
 "whereof PERSONAL IDENTITY consisted at one  
 "time, may be varied at another without the  
 "change of PERSONAL IDENTITY, there being  
 "no question about the same person, altho' the  
 "limbs, which but now were a part of it, be  
 "cut off." And I believe no one will affirm  
 there is, especially if he define person, with Mr.  
 LOCKE, to be "a thinking, intelligent Being,  
 "that has reason and reflection, &c." This ar-  
 gument, I conceive, therefore, to be of no effect,  
 since, according to Mr. LOCKE's own definition,  
 personal self does not consist of that substance,  
 which he has shewn may be varied, &c. The  
 mistake here appears to arise from the not dis-  
 tinguishing between a thing's being constituted  
 of, or united to another, and between personal  
 self, and human self, or the sameness of person and  
 of



of man, had it been inferred, that the substance, whereof human self consisted at one time, might be varied at another, without the change of human IDENTITY, it might perhaps have been just, but then it would have had no weight in the present case.

SECT. XXVI. Again, §. 21. Mr. LOCKE, having supposed in the second and third place, the same man to be either "the same animal," "without any regard to an immaterial-soul," or, "the same immaterial spirit united to the same animal," proceeds to affirm, that by either of these, SOCRATES, in this life and after it, cannot be the same man any way but by the same consciousness. But how does it appear that he can be the same by this consciousness? If the same man be only the same animal, then certainly, according to Mr. LOCKE's own determination of the IDENTITY of animals, the same consciousness hath no relation to his IDENTITY, which is constituted only by "the same continued life." If we take the other part of the supposition, to wit, that the same man is "the same immaterial spirit united to the same animal," consciousness has as little to do with it, the constituents of

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IDENTITY, in this case, being apparently the sameness of the immaterial spirit, and of the animal. And here it may not be impertinent to observe, that Mr. LOCKE's definition of the IDENTITY of the same man, §. 6. to wit, that "it consists in nothing but a participation of the same continued life, by constantly fleeting particles of matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized body;" this definition also, I say, renders it impossible for the same man to be raised again at the resurrection, as is evident from only considering the words.

On the whole, the only definition of the same man, which will agree with common sense and opinion, and, at the same time, make it possible for the same man to be raised again at the resurrection, must be taken from the real constitution of man, as compounded, and this not of an immaterial spirit, and an animal, but of an immaterial spirit and a body; the same soul or the same person, united to a body, either constituted of such particular parts, or peculiarly organized. If this be not the case, let us suppose that the proper idea of a man is, that he be compounded of an immortal spirit and an animal;  
if



if the animal then be not wholly material, (which if so, however modified, would be but another name for a body) this must also be compounded, to wit, of a body and an immaterial life. A man, therefore, is a triply compounded Being, and constituted of an immortal spirit, a body, and an immaterial life of a nature different from either, and the constituents of his IDENTITY are to be sought accordingly. But these things, I imagine, no one will maintain.

SECT. XXVII. Again, §. 22. Mr. LOCKE supposes that a man, sober, and intoxicated with liquor, is two different persons. If this be the case, then is one person punished for an evil action of another; the sober person being in fault, and the person intoxicated feeling the effects of it; for, certainly that state, in which a man is degraded below the rank of a brute, cannot be considered, even in itself, otherwise than a punishment, and the sober person is the sole cause of this state, he *willing* to drink the liquor. According to the scheme of the same consciousness, therefore, the wise Ruler of the universe hath, necessarily, connected the suffering of one person with the sin of another. But this,

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I conceive, will scarce require a particular refutation.

SECT. XXVIII. And, now to conclude this head, Mr. LOCKE's remaining arguments are either adapted, as before observed, to prove that the same consciousness is necessary to make a man *himself to himself*; or seem to depend on the supposition of its being impossible to conceive of any thing except this consciousness, which can be supposed to constitute PERSONAL IDENTITY. The question will therefore, of course recur,—What is it that *does* constitute PERSONAL IDENTITY? — But this query being of great importance; and having already occasioned many different opinions, will, necessarily, require a separate chapter to itself, we proceed, therefore, to the particular consideration of it, in part the second of this Essay.

## PART II.



## P A R T II.

### *An Attempt to discover the real Constituent of* **PERSONAL IDENTITY.**

SECT. I. **W**E have now clearly seen, that the *same consciousness* is not the constituent of **PERSONAL IDENTITY**: the question still remains, What is? It is manifest, first then, that this must be some distinguishing, incommunicable property or affection. This appears the most rational, as absolutely fixing the individuation of persons: a matter of so great importance, that on it depends the whole rationale of man's creation as a moral agent; the justice of his being placed in a state of trial; and of the most important consequences resulting from his behaviour therein.

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SECT. II. That the real constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY is incommunicable, seems also a natural conclusion from analogy; for, as observed Part the 1st, we perceive the Identity of almost every thing, with which we are acquainted, to depend upon something unalienable. Thus a *continuation* of existence in the same form constitutes the identity of inanimate substances; that of vegetables and animals also is determined by the same life *uninterruptedly continued*. It is reasonable then, that PERSONAL IDENTITY (an object of infinitely superior importance) should likewise depend upon something, in its own nature, absolutely incommunicable. If this be not the case, many of the absurdities mentioned before, as consequent from the scheme of the same consciousness, will here again occur; this must be evident to every one who considers what has been said with but a little attention, several important objections against the same consciousness depending upon its being, in its own nature, communicable.

SECT. III. It must, therefore, be an incommunicable property that constitutes PERSONAL IDENTITY;



IDENTITY; for it is manifest, that the sole constituent of any thing must be essential to it, since it would be absurd and self-contradictory to suppose that any thing is wholly constituted by what is only accidental to it. It is necessary then, that the constituent of the identity of a person be essential to it; but, if it be essential to it, it is manifest that it cannot be taken away, in order to be communicated to any thing else, its own existence as the same, and that of the Being in which it is, ceasing at the instant in which it is wanting.

SECT. IV. On the whole, therefore, it appears, that the constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY must be something distinguishing and incommunicable;—but, where shall this be found? The same consciousness, a particular kind of thought, it cannot be, as before proved at large. We must, therefore, look for it in THOUGHT, AS SUCH; an uninterrupted continuation of which is evidently distinguishing and incommunicable; for, in order to be communicated to another Being, it must, first, cease in the one, in which it is, but, if it cease for an instant, it is annihilated as a continuation of thought, and there is nothing remaining to be

communicated. This constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY is, therefore, effectually distinguishing, and also unalienable; and what other can we conceive of which is so? Again, if we may judge from Mr. LOCKE's words, it is evident that he himself was in fact obliged to suppose a continuation of thought to be essential to personality; see his definition of person, to wit, that it is "a thinking, intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself the same thinking thing in different times and places." Here it is evident, that the sole criterion, by which he distinguishes a person from all other beings, is that it has thought, (for what else can be intended by reason, intelligence, reflection and consideration than particular species of this); whenever, therefore, thought is absent, there is, even according to Mr. LOCKE's own definition, an end of personality, which is what we maintain.

SECT. V. But, before we proceed further, it may not be improper a little to illustrate what is meant by a continuation of thought, as the constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY; and this may best, perhaps, be effected by an example. If a person then, at this time, thinks; and  
uninter-



uninterruptedly continues so to do until a year hence, he is, according to the supposition, at the end of the year, the same person that he was at the beginning of it; but if, at any time in the interval, he ceases to think, he then ceases to be, or is absolutely annihilated as the same person; and this, I conceive, manifestly follows, at least, from the best judgment we are able to form of the nature of spiritual, or “of thinking, intelligent beings.”

SECT. VI. But here some may imagine, that as thought distinguishes spirits or persons in general from matter, it cannot, considered merely as such, distinguish particular spirits from each other; and, therefore, that a continuation of it is not the proper constituent of spiritual or PERSONAL IDENTITY. It is true, we conceive the essential life, and distinguishing property of all spirits and persons to be thought; but may not a continuation of this in one person be as different from that in another, as a continuation of roundness in one bowl, or of life in one animal, is from that of either of them in another of the same kind? What distinguishes matter from spirits is solidity; this is essential to all matter; but

but it does not, therefore, by any means follow, that the solidity of one atom is the same with that of another; for, were this the case, the like would follow of every other essential property of matter, to wit, of extension, figure, and divisibility; and so the consequence would be, that all the atoms in the universe are but one and the same atom; and all the different compounds of them but one and the same compound; which, I believe, scarce any one will affirm. Exactly similar, in this respect, is thought with solidity; thought or consciousness distinguishes all spirits from matter, but then consciousness in one spirit is not the same with that in another, but sufficiently different and distinguishing; and this I take to be the true state of the case.

SECT. VII. Some, however, will after all, probably, imagine, that PERSONAL IDENTITY rather consists in Identity of Substance. Of such it might naturally be enquired,—What is this Substance? If, in answer, they suppose it to be thought, their opinion concerning the identity of person cannot differ from ours: If they imagine it to be something, in which thought is, and  
of



of which it is the life (as no other life of souls can be conceived of), then certainly a continuation of thought is a continuation of the Identity of that life : But it is evident, that the Identity of all living or animate Beings whatever consists not merely in the Identity of substance, but in the Identity of the life of that substance ; for no living thing whatever can be living, and therefore can be the same, any longer than it has life ; whenever it ceases to have the same life, it ceases to be the same ; and the same life, once destroyed, can never again be restored, for otherwise the same thing would have two beginnings of existence ; on a continuation, therefore, of their respectively proper kinds of life, manifestly depends the Identity of all living Beings ; and, consequently, that of Person is determined in the same manner by thought, its essential life ; which is what was necessary to be proved.

On the whole, therefore, let the advocates for Identity of substance suppose this substance to be thought, or something else, in which thought inheres, either way it is manifest, that PERSONAL IDENTITY must be constituted and determined by an uninterrupted continuation of thought.

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SECT. VIII. But, in this place; the authority of Dr. WATTS will probably be objected. This learned author, it is true, imagined that PERSONAL IDENTITY consisted in Identity of substance: let us, therefore, consider what appears to be the only argument he has adduced in support of this his opinion; see Phil. Essays, page 310. Dr. WATTS, here, querying how the sameness of the thinking substance may be secured, answers thus: “Supposing a mind or  
 “spirit, or any conscious Being, to be entirely  
 “immaterial, and (as I think) inextended also,  
 “it is impossible that any part of it can be  
 “changed or diminished, without destroying  
 “the whole, because ’tis so simple and uniform  
 “a Being, ’tis a conscious and active power  
 “subsisting by itself. It has no parts, and cannot but exist, or cease to exist in the whole or  
 “at once. Any new substance, therefore, coming in the room of this makes it properly a  
 “different Person, it is another self, another intelligent mind or conscious Being.” Now, the whole of this argument is for our point, as it evidently depends upon the supposition, that this substance, of which Dr. WATTS speaks, is pure thought. What else do we know of which is  
 “entirely



“entirely immaterial, inextended, and has no  
 “parts.” But it may be said that Dr. WATTS  
 somewhere asserts, that this substance is a *Power*  
*of Thinking*. If this be an objection, he himself  
 answers it, in another place, by allowing, that,  
 if actual thought be taken from this power, he  
 knows not of any thing remaining; in the above  
 quoted passage, also, he expressly asserts, that  
 this power itself is conscious and active, and not  
 —that it is capable of producing consciousness:  
 It seems therefore probable, that even he him-  
 self did not conceive a power of thinking, con-  
 sidered merely as such, to be the substance of the  
 soul, or to constitute PERSONAL IDENTITY.  
 But, nevertheless, since it is generally agreed,  
 from a kind of intuition, that there is a sub-  
 stance, in which actual thought inheres, let us  
 suppose, with Dr. WATTS, that this substance of  
 the soul is a power of thinking: It is agreed then,  
 that the essential life of that substance is ac-  
 tual thought; but it has been already proved,  
 that the Identity of all animate Beings does  
 properly consist in a continuation of their res-  
 pective kinds of life. Even, therefore, ac-  
 cording to the supposition of Dr. WATTS, PER-

PERSONAL IDENTITY does properly consist in an uninterrupted continuation of thought.

SECT. IX. Let us, however, a little further consider this opinion of a power of thinking.

It is manifest, that if a power alone be the constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY, and it were possible for this power ever to cease from actual exertion, it would still continue to constitute PERSONAL IDENTITY. Dr. WATTS however allows, that, if actual thought be taken from this power, he knows not of any thing remaining. It is not, therefore, a power of thinking, but a continuation of actual thought that constitutes PERSONAL IDENTITY.

SECT. X. Again, it seems rational, also, that we should be, in some measure, accountable for this power, if it be the essence, or part of the essence of a person or moral agent. But, as it solely respects the existence of thought, we cannot be in the least cognizable on that account, since thought, considered only as such, is a necessary act. It is most certain that the power we have, and for the use of which we are answerable, respects the  
moral



moral good or evil, and not, by any means, the mere existence of thought. A power of thinking, therefore, cannot be the substance of the soul, or even essential to it.

SECT. XI. This argument may, also, be considered after another manner: We have just seen, that, if a power of thinking be either in whole or part the substance of a person, we must be accountable for it, and that this can only be with respect to our using or not using it; but, if this be the case, that we are accountable for exerting or not exerting this power, then, certainly (as nothing can deserve praise or blame, reward or punishment, but what is an object of choice) we must, first, choose to do one or the other, which still makes actual thought essential to a Person, as being necessarily previous to every exertion of the power: according to this we must suppose, also, that what, by the scheme, can only be an effect, is prior to, and, in some measure, causes its cause.

SECT. XII. There are, indeed, many reasons which demonstratively evince that a power of thinking cannot be the constituent of PERSONAL

PERSONAL IDENTITY. It is very evident, that this power is essentially different from thought : it is impossible for a power of producing or causing any thing, considered as such, to be the same with the thing produced or caused. If a power of thinking, therefore, be sufficient to constitute PERSONAL IDENTITY, there may be a Person, which, from the beginning of its existence to the conclusion of it, never had a single idea ; nor is thought any way necessary to constitute a person, or a “ thinking, intelligent Being.”

But I am the more brief in considering this opinion, although adopted by a learned author, because I imagine there are but few men, who will conceive their PERSONAL IDENTITY to depend upon a mere *Power*—a Phantom, which, when disunited from actual thought, appeared, even to the authors of its existence, as empty nothing : I would not, therefore, too long engage with an ideal being, a *vox & preterea nihil*.

SECT. XIII. Having now cursorily considered the schemes which place PERSONAL IDENTITY in the identity of substance, or in a power  
of



of thinking, we proceed next to a review of that long contested question—Whether or not it be essential to the soul to think always? This is the more particularly necessary, as upon the determination of this enquiry, principally, depends the proof of the position concerning a continuation of thought. If it be essential to the soul to think always, it is manifest that the Being of a soul or person, as the same, depends upon its continual thinking; if not—it is evident that an uninterrupted continuation of thought cannot be the constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY. Every one knows that Mr. LOCKE's opinion was, that the soul does not think always. His doctrine, indeed, with respect to PERSONAL IDENTITY, appears a natural consequence of this his notion: for, as it of course made him imagine, that we knew of nothing that was essential to the soul, this only could have induced him to suppose, that the same consciousness, an act neither necessarily constant, nor incommunicable, was the constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY. Had he conceived of any thing as essential to the soul, he would, I should think, have rather placed its identity in a continuation of that, than in what was merely accidental. But

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to return : Mr. LOCKE, in support of this opinion, that the soul does not think always, has adduced various arguments, as the reader may see at large in the 2d Book, and 1st Chapter of the Essay on the Human Understanding. Most of these have been answered in Essay the fifth of Dr. Watts's Philosophical Essays : I shall here, therefore, only add, that the ground of all the arguments against the continual thinking of the soul, is, that there are times, in which we do not remember it to have thought ; these however, when considerable, appear to be only in consequence of greater degrees of that forgetfulness, of which we experience such innumerable instances in our minds. But I must omit a particular consideration of this, since I would, as much as possible, avoid the repetition of whatever I know others already have written : for the same reason, also, I shall wave the mention of several arguments of Dr. WATTS in support of the *probability* of the perpetual thinking of the soul ; for all which I refer to his above-mentioned Essay.

SECT. XIV. It remains now for us to see if any thing else can be offered in favour of the position,



position, that it is essential to the soul to think always.

It is, first, then manifestly agreeable to the opinions of mankind in general, that thought is essential to the soul. Let us ask any one, learned or unlearned, What is his idea of a spirit? The sense of his answer will constantly be, that it is a thinking Being: this is the primary and only property, by which men distinguish spirits from other existences; and they would imagine it absurd to speak of a spirit without thought. I appeal to all or any one for the truth of this—Who is there whose idea of spirit comprehends not thought?

SECT. XV. It appears reasonable, in the next place, that thought should be ever necessary to the soul, because of its importance. All moral good and evil is predicable only of thought, or, at least, of Beings considered as thinking. The reasonableness of our state of probation here depends entirely upon this principle. It is only according to the purity or impurity of thought, that persons can be denominated good or evil; we ourselves can be said to live well or ill, solely,

ly, with respect to this: virtue and vice, the justice of rewards and punishments in the present, as well as in a future state; in a word, every thing that is, or can be important to souls or persons, depends ultimately on thought. Is it rational, therefore, to suppose, that God, the supremely wise, would create an exalted rank of beings; that he would place them in a probationary state; and make their whole merit or demerit, their immediate, and consequent happiness or misery, entirely to depend upon a kind of affection or action only accidental to their nature? Shall the happiness of separate spirits, also, consist in the improvement and due applications of something no way essential to them? It is, certainly, reasonable to suppose, that every being should be good or evil, happy or miserable, according to the good or evil inclination of its nature or essence; but thought, if it be not essential to souls or persons, cannot be denominated their essence, or indeed any part of it, being only an accident, and not, at any time, necessarily connected with it. If this then be just, and it be also true (which is certainly the case) that no person can be termed praise or blame worthy except with respect to thought,

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it evidently follows, that thought is essential to all souls and persons, and necessary to their very existence.

SECT. XVI. But this matter may be still more demonstratively evinced. No one, I imagine, will deny that it is necessary for a soul or person to think at some time or other; or affirm that to be a spirit, which, during the whole course of its existence, never once thought; see Mr. LOCKE's own words on this subject, Chap. 27. § 23. "For whatever substance there is, "however framed, without consciousness there "is no person; and a carcase may be a person, "as well as any sort of substance be so without "consciousness." Here it is evident, that let Mr. LOCKE mean by consciousness either thought in general, or the same consciousness, a particular kind of thought, either way what he says is equally and most expressly for our purpose, to wit, to prove, that it is essential to a person sometimes to think. Let us just consider what would be the consequence of a contrary opinion: if thought, then, at some time or other, be not essential to a soul, or person, there may be a spirit, a Being deserving of re-

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ward or punishment, praise or blame, which, from the beginning of its existence to the conclusion of it, or to all eternity, never has thought, or will think; never has had, or will have, one idea, notion or conception. But this is so evidently absurd and disagreeable to the sense all men affix to the word soul, or spirit, that it might justly be thought worthy of censure, were I to spend much time in disproving it; who could forbear smiling, were any one to tell him, that a spirit is something, which wants every thing we know necessary to constitute a spirit? I, therefore, take for granted that it is essential to a soul sometimes to think; but this being certain, we may, by the same method of reasoning used once before, absolutely prove, that it being essential to a soul to think only once, it is essential to it to think always. This may, perhaps, appear a bold conclusion, and without reason or proof; but let us consider before we condemn. If to think once be essential to a soul, then, without that one thought, there could not be a soul; but this one thought can only be an act, or effect any thing whilst it is itself in existence, for nothing is nothing, and, by nothing, nothing can be caused or effected; while, therefore, this

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one thought exists, there is a soul, but this thought can have no influence before it begins, or after it ceases to exist; the existence of the soul, therefore, commences and terminates with that of the thought: the soul therefore must always think, and this is essential to it.

SECT. XVII. I conceive it is now apparent, that, if it be essential to a person or spirit to think but once, it is essential to it to think always. Let us, notwithstanding, for the sake of as much perspicuity in evidence as possible, a little further consider this point. What is there, then, in the material world, that is at any time essential to a thing, and is not always essential to the constitution of it as the same? Is it necessary to make a mass of matter the same to-day that it was yesterday, that it have the same individual atoms? This is always essential to it. Is a continuation of the same figure or life essential to the constituting particular bodies or vegetables, the same now that they were five minutes since? This continuation is always essential to them. Exactly similar is the case with the soul; if thought at any time be essential to it, it must always be essential.

SECT.

SECT. XVIII. On the whole, then, it evidently follows, that it is essential to a soul or person not only to think once, but to think always. An uninterrupted continuation of thought, therefore, is a property on which the very Being of souls and persons depends: but any Being, once at an end, cannot again be created the same. SPIRITUAL OR PERSONAL IDENTITY, therefore, wholly depends upon an uninterrupted continuation of thought, which, consequently, is its real and proper constituent.

SECT. XIX. The general opinion, or common sense of mankind, is also much in favour of this constituent of the Identity of Persons. In order the more clearly to evince this, we must suppose, as the object of the opinion, a simple spiritual intelligence, or a pure person; for most men, considering a person as united to a body, are too apt to confound one with the other. Let us then suppose some past action of a pure person made known to any particular man; and let it be enquired of him—Who now is the person that performed that action? His natural thoughts, upon such a question, would not be that the Identity or sameness of this finite Being depended upon



on its recollecting or forgetting that past deed, of which it had been the author, (since such an opinion would be directly contrary to all the ideas or notions he could have of the Identity of Spirits, to wit, those that he had obtained from a knowledge of his own mind, which he perceives continually to forget, and again recollect, and which he believes not on that account different), but the sense of his natural answer would be this—That spirit, which has unceasingly existed since its performance of the action to the present time, is the same that performed it. Now, as we cannot, possibly, form ideas of any other kinds of Being than matter and thought; and as matter here is entirely out of the question, the answerer, in this case, could have no other meaning by unceasing existence than unceasing thinking, unless he, possibly, could mean something, of which he himself could not, possibly, have any idea; which is the same thing as to have an idea, which it was impossible for him to have. Thus does it appear, that common sense, also, would dictate a continuation of thought as the constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY. Yet I mention not this as a certain proof, but only to shew,

shew, that the general opinion of mankind does likewise coincide with what, I conceive, is already sufficiently evinced.

SECT. XX. We have now adduced several arguments in support of the position concerning an uninterrupted continuation of thought as the constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY ; it may not be improper, in the next place, to consider some late curious opinions concerning spirits and thought ; which, if true, will not a little oppose what we have endeavoured to prove. Several of these strange notions are interspersed in a foreign treatise, intitled, *An Essay on the Essence and Energy of Things* ; a translated extract from which may be seen in the *Monthly Review*, vol. 30th—to which, as I have never seen the original, I am indebted for the knowledge of the work.

SECT. XXI. According to this extract then, the author of the Essay expressly attributes to spirits the essential properties of matter ; in consequence of this, he compares thought to motion, and affirms that they are of the same nature and kind. An opinion entirely groundless,



less, and even, perhaps, impossible to be true. A little consideration will evince its fallacy. Thought is said to be the action of spirits, in the same manner that motion is of bodies; and as motion is allowed to be only accidental to matter, so is thought said to be with respect to spirits. But the case is by no means parallel. Let us even allow thought to be only the action of spirits, still there is a manifest difference between this and the action of Bodies in the mode of their existence: We cannot conceive of, it is absurd to suppose *that*, a spirit, which, from the beginning to the end of its existence, never once thought: Thought therefore, at some time or other, is essential to a spirit. Far different from this is the case with the motion of bodies; should solid extension have existed from its creation, seven thousand years since, and continue to its annihilation, seven thousand perhaps hence, without having once moved or changed its place, there would, nevertheless, be no absurdity, I imagine, in terming this solid extension, matter.

Thought, therefore, in spirits, and motion in bodies, although we should even allow each  
of

of them to be the action of its respective substance, are, notwithstanding, essentially different in their natures, and in the modes in which they exist as actions.

SECT. XXII. But the same gentleman, who maintains thought to be only the action of spirits, as motion is of bodies, has also chymically dissected, and most accurately examined this action; in consequence of which he finds, that thought differs from motion, only as a compound from a simple. Surprising discovery! and that thinking Beings are but refined compounds of bodies. Poor spirits! I am afraid, in a short time, every apothecary will be at work on them; they will be obliged to undergo the various operations of fermentation, dissolution, precipitation, &c. &c. until every particle of them be separated, and all the little component bodies appear in their original, elementary state. One circumstance, however, in this curious hypothesis, will be a little troublesome: the author says, the thinking Being is a refined compound of physical substances; and physical substances, he says, are material or palpable objects of sense, which may be seen, heard, felt, &c.

Now,



Now, I am a little apprehensive, that it will be somewhat difficult to find any one, who has ever *seen, heard, felt, tasted, or smelled* these *thinking things*. However, hypothesis, ever ready, furnishes a happy remedy even for this; it is but supposing that spirits are compounded of bodies, which cannot, by any means, be made the objects of sense, and the difficulty is removed.

SECT. XXIII. But to proceed: This author expressly affirms, that it is impossible for thought to be essential to any simple Being; this, as it evidently opposes what we have endeavoured to prove, it will be proper cursorily to consider. His words, then, are these: "That thought, or the faculty of thinking, cannot be the essential property of any simple Being whatever, is obvious, because an antecedent sensation or perception is necessary to every idea, consequently more so to any reflection on those ideas: so that it is impossible for a Being to think, without a capacity both of perception and retention; both which have their respective organs in the composition of the animal frame; and, necessarily, prove, that any Being, possessed of per-

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"ception,

“ception, memory, and reflection, must be a  
“ a compound.”

In order clearly to demonstrate this argument, we must consider the premises made use of, and the mode of inference from them. The author, first, affirms that an antecedent sensation or perception is necessary to all ideas and reflections on them; let us concede him this with respect to man, which, certainly, is all he can expect. He next infers, that it is impossible for a Being to think without a capacity both of perception and retention: If we grant this also, it by no means follows, that a Being, capable of exerting itself two different ways, is therefore, necessarily, a compound of the most diverse substances, such powers being compatible with the greatest simplicity. But see the conclusion: Perception and retention (that is, the kinds of them peculiar to the human soul) have their respective organs in the animal frame—every Being, therefore, that possesses them must be a compound. Reasoning from analogy this with a vengeance! Because a part of our ideas are derived, originally, from sensation, therefore, no Being in the universe can think at all, without



out having senses. Because my spirit is united to a body, therefore no spirit can think without a body. But, perhaps, this argument will need no other refutation than itself, placed in a plain, syllogistic form, in which it will stand thus :

If I receive, and retain my ideas of matter, by the mediums of my senses and other bodily organs, then it is impossible for any being in the universe ever to think without the assistance of senses.

But I do receive and retain my ideas of matter, by the assistance of my senses, and other bodily organs.

It is impossible, therefore, for any Being in the universe ever to think without the assistance of senses. A very important conclusion—and a very easy method of inference ! It would not be a difficult task to prove, after the same manner, any proposition that could be mentioned. Suppose, for instance, it were required to demonstrate, that there are no Beings in the universe except material ones ; it might be done thus, with great facility : Whatever I cannot perceive to exist by  
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the mediums of my senses, does not exist at all. But I cannot perceive any, except material Beings, to exist, by the mediums of my senses: *Ergo*, &c.

SECT. XXIV. But this opinion we are speaking of, although the offspring of an evidently ingenious author, scarce merits a formal refutation: we might otherwise shew, that it renders it impossible for the souls of men, from death to the general resurrection; for separate spirits or angels; or even for the blessed Deity himself, ever to have a single thought or conception, unless, with proper abhorrence be it spoken, we should suppose him, who is *simplicity itself*, and *pure spirituality*, a compounded being, and, in part, material.

SECT. XXV. I am apprehensive, indeed, that the author's mind, or (which is equally proper according to his scheme) his body was, at the time of his adopting this strange opinion, too much engaged in the consideration of matter: he never else would have been so severe upon spirits, as to have assigned them for ever so heavy and sluggish a coadjutor; and have made their  
very



very existence, or at least their essential life, to depend on so uncertain a supposition, as that matter is eternal. The whole fabric of the universe, bodies and spirits, might thus, almost, be overturned with a breath.

SECT. XXVI. But to return: I have now endeavoured to prove, that it is essential to a soul or spirit to think always; I have also attempted to answer some objections against this doctrine; and, if what has been said be true, then is it essential to spirits and persons to think always; and an uninterrupted continuation of thought is the constituent of SPIRITUAL OR PERSONAL IDENTITY.

The truth of this supposition is rendered further probable, as the sameness of person, as well as that of man, is hereby effectually secured; since, if it be just, it is impossible that the same man should be two or more different persons. For the same man, consisting of a body of such a particular form or organization, united to the same soul, and the sameness of this soul being supposed to depend upon an uninterrupted continuation of thought; it is most evident, that  
whilst

whilst any one continues the same man, he must also continue the same person : again, it is manifest, that the same person will never be two different men ; for the same individual body not being necessary to constitute the same man, but one of such a particular organization, it is evident, that unless the whole structure and form of the human body be altered, the same person will ever be the same man. And herein we fully agree with common sense, and the general opinion of mankind, as well as with the simplicity of the nature of Souls and Persons, properly so called. But as the same author, on some of whose opinions we have just remarked, thinks that all errors, on the subject of PERSONAL IDENTITY, arise from mistaken notions of the simplicity of person, it may not be improper for us briefly to consider this point.

SECT. XXVII. The gentleman's words then are these : " Our perplexity on this subject arises  
 " from the error of supposing the person of an  
 " individual, a simple and uncompounded  
 " Being ; whereas it is compounded of a mul-  
 " tiplicity of physical, metaphysical, and moral  
 " qualities and relations ; the combination of  
 " which



“ which is its essence, and determines its Identity.” In order to understand this, it must be remarked, that this writer had before distinguished all the beings of the universe into physical, metaphysical, and moral. “ Physical Beings (he tells us) are material or palpable objects of sense, which may be seen, felt, heard, &c.” “ Metaphysical—are intellectual, or merely objects of the understanding; and Moral—are a mixt species, compounded of both the former, being partly objects of sense, and partly of the understanding.” Now, as Mr. LOCKE has long since defined Person to mean “ a thinking, intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, &c.” and, as we have followed this definition, and—considered Person as signifying a universal idea, applicable to moral agents in general; and have also shewn, that, even in the common sense of the word, matter is by no means an essential part of its meaning, it is manifest, that the *physical* qualities and relations, of which this author speaks, can have no manner of connection with the Identity of person, as here considered. *Moral* qualities and relations also, as above defined, are not the affections of a *person*, properly so called,

but

but of a *man*. And, although from the union of a person with a body, in this life, every one is properly, in his personal capacity, accountable for actions he performed as a man; yet there is no necessity, therefore, of confounding the essential idea of a *person* with that of a *man*, there being a manifest difference between any one thing's being constituted of, or vitally united to, another being. This author's *physical* and *moral* qualities and relations, therefore, are entirely foreign to the Identity of Person, properly so called, and so treated of in this dispute. There remain, then, only his *metaphysical* qualities and relations; and, if he would chuse to consider PERSONAL IDENTITY as depending on a continuation of them, we have no objection; since it is evident that these metaphysical qualities can, in the present case, mean only different modes of thought; this opinion, therefore, would in no wise oppose the one here maintained, to wit, that PERSONAL IDENTITY depends upon an uninterrupted continuation of thought.

SECT. XXVIII. But the impossibility of this author's hypothesis may be easily evinced in another manner: If the proper idea of a person be,  
that



that it is a compound of physical, metaphysical, and moral qualities and relations, then, certainly, some physical and moral, as well as metaphysical qualities and relations are absolutely necessary to the constitution of any person. But the soul of man, from the time of its separation from the body, until the general resurrection, cannot possibly, in this writer's sense of them, have any physical or moral qualities; separate spirits, also, can at no time have them. It plainly then follows, that these, to wit, the souls of men, and separate spirits, are not, nor can be, persons, or moral agents; beings deserving of reward or punishment, praise or blame. But whether this consequence, which makes *matter* essential to *personality*, be not absolutely contradictory to common sense, and to the general as well as philosophic idea affixed to the term *person*, let the author himself calmly determine, I doubt not that his adopting so strange an opinion, was owing to his too hastily overlooking the consequences, evidently and immediately deducible therefrom.

SECT. XXIX. But to proceed: We have now considered some of the principal objections both

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against

against the opinion of the continual thinking of the soul; and—of an uninterrupted continuation of thought, as the constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY. Whether these objections have still any appearance of validity, the reader must determine. It is certain, however, that the most, if not all of them, arise from our considering spirits as material beings, or, at least, as possessed of some of the essential properties of matter; a notion by no means founded on experience, or that knowledge of our minds, which we are capable of attaining from reflection and observation.

Matter, indeed, is not only by the definition, but even by the general opinion of mankind, excluded from the proper idea of a person, as was shewn in the beginning of this essay. PERSONAL IDENTITY, therefore, if it be determined by any thing we know of, must be—by something essential to, and solely predicable of, spiritual Beings. This being the case, it appears to me, that only the four following properties or actions can enter into the dispute.

1st, The



1<sup>st</sup>, The same consciousness, or that act whereby we appropriate to ourselves past actions, &c.

2<sup>dly</sup>, A power of causing the same consciousness, whether exerted or not.

3<sup>dly</sup>, A mere power of thinking.

4<sup>thly</sup>, Thought or consciousness, considered as such.

The three first of these we have already endeavoured to try in the ballance; and whether or not they were found wanting, every one must determine for himself. The powers of thinking, and of causing the same consciousness, have however, on examination, appeared to be little more than mere phantoms, at least, as relative to PERSONAL IDENTITY. The same consciousness has, indeed, a more important relation to it, to wit, that of the sign to the thing signified; the same consciousness being that whereby we perceive ourselves the same, although an uninterrupted continuation of thought is what, I conceive, in fact makes us so. The most plausible

fible objections against this last opinion I have but just now stated, and endeavoured to answer. It may be proper, in the next place, cursorily to recapitulate some of the arguments before adduced in support of it.

SECT. XXX. A continuation of thought, then, is absolutely incommunicable, and distinguishing, and thereby certainly fixes particular PERSONAL IDENTITY.

Thought also is essential to persons, and that always; and, therefore, may properly be considered as their essential life; for, whenever it ceases, their very existence immediately terminates.

It comprehends all we know concerning spirits or persons, considered as such, and every thing we can suppose essential to them.

A continuation of thought has, also, common sense and the general opinion of mankind, at least, as much in its favour as any other supposed constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY. And, lastly, it is likewise free from those absurdities  
and



and contradictions with which the scheme of the same consciousness is so justly chargeable.

These reasons, some of them demonstrative, and others probable, do, I think, sufficiently evince, that the real constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY is an uninterrupted continuation of thought.

SECT. XXXI. It may be observed also, in favour of this opinion, that it will nothing opugn the truth of it, let philosophers determine what they please concerning the real substance of a soul or spirit; let them suppose it to be some hidden substratum, or most substantial substance, in which all we know of our souls inheres only as modal; or let them imagine it to be a mere power of thinking; it matters not either way; it has been already proved, that actual thought is essential to a soul or person, and that always; whenever, therefore, thought ceases, the Identity of a Person is at an end: whatever then is supposed the real substance of a soul, it is manifest, that spiritual or PERSONAL

NAL IDENTITY will ever be determined by an uninterrupted continuation of thought.

SECT. XXXII. Nor will it be any valid plea against this consequence to object, that thought is so extremely diverse, and continually changing. It must be observed, that it is not a particular thought, or kind of thought, which constitutes PERSONAL IDENTITY, but only thought in general; that is, present PERSONAL IDENTITY is not determined by a present thought, considered as versant about any particular object, but considered as part of a general idea, as thought, and nothing else. The case, therefore, being thus, PERSONAL IDENTITY is not constituted by something diverse and changing, but simple and uniform. This may be best illustrated by a simile: It is necessary, in order to form an angle, that two lines should meet; this is essential to it; but, although the number of assignable lengths be, in a manner, infinite, it is absolutely indifferent, and foreign to the point, which of these we should suppose the lines to have. Thus, although the lines containing the angle may be of infinite diversity, yet is that which is essential to an angle most simple, uniform



form, and immutable. The same is the case with thought; the objects, &c. of our thoughts are most diverse and innumerable, but what we conceive as essential to their nature, is simple and immutable.

SECT. XXXIII. I have now considered at large Mr. LOCKE's opinion concerning the constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY; I have also endeavoured to establish a very different doctrine concerning it, and to invalidate any objections that might occur. It may now appear strange to some, that we should have been obliged to spend so much time on this subject, and that the ascertaining the real constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY should be a matter of such difficulty, whilst the same consciousness, its sign, is so constantly and easily known. But it must be considered, that the latter alone is necessary, and indeed of the greatest importance in the affairs of life, to wit, that we should perceive ourselves the same at different times, whilst it is a point of but little importance, in practice, for us to know what really makes us so. And in the ordering of this, the greatest wisdom is evidently perceptible; what is absolutely necessary  
for

for our welfare, being, as it were, intuitively perceived, whilst that, which is only a matter of speculation, lies, in some measure, buried in obscurity. Thus we easily know ourselves the same, but *why* we are so, being an enquiry of less moment, is attended with much greater difficulty.

SECT. XXXIV. I have now finished what I had to offer on this head; and it may not perhaps be impertinent to conclude with an observation concerning the constituent of Identity in general, or the so famous PRINCIPIUM INDIVIDUATIONIS. This, Mr. LOCKE says, “it is plain  
“is existence itself, which determines a Being  
“of any sort to a particular time and place, in-  
“communicable to two Beings of the same kind.” This principle of Identity being intended for an universal one, is, in the first place, evidently imperfect; for, in order to determine Individuation in general, by time and place, these, as particular, should be not only incommunicable to two Beings of the *same* kind, but incommunicable to any two Beings whatever, whether of the same or of a different kind; for, if a mass of matter and a spirit are created at the same  
time,



time, and may be in the same place; then, certainly time and place cannot distinguish these two Beings from each other.

But to pass by this, Mr. LOCKE's assertion, as it stands, manifestly depends upon the supposition of its being impossible for any two things of a like nature to be in the same place at the same time. That this is true, with respect to bodies, is most certain; but that it is also the case with spirits, is to me, I confess, by no means self-evident; and the reason of its being generally thought so, is, I believe, our naturally attributing to spirits some of the essential properties of matter. There can be no reason assigned why two spirits should not be in the same place at the same time, unless these spirits be supposed to have solid extension: see Dr. WATT's observations on this subject, *Philosophical Essay*, *Ess.* 12th. §. 7. and also *Ess.* 6. §. 2. where he asserts, that place is not predicable of spirits. But, be this as it may, so far is certain, that no reason, except taken from some property of matter, can be assigned, why two spirits should not be in the same place at the same time; and, certainly, no one will deny,

deny, that it is, at least, *possible* for spirits to be immaterial.

Mr. LOCKE had, therefore, only discovered the principle of individuation with respect to bodies; that of spirits still remained to be sought: for, if two spirits were created at the same time, and either may be in the same place, or cannot be said to be in any place, we must look for something else besides time and place to determine their individuation. It is however manifest, that the Identity of all created Beings has some relation to time; and spirits, beginning to exist at different times, might be fully distinguished by that circumstance; but several spirits, created at once, although existing in time, cannot be distinguished by time. A universal principle of Individuation is, therefore, as yet undiscovered, and so perhaps will ever remain, unless it should be explained by a synonymous term, and be said to consist in ESSENCE, or that by which any thing is what it is. And the reason, in my opinion, why a universal principle of individuation will ever remain undiscovered, is this, that there is, in reality, no such principle; that of bodies, as I think, being one thing, and, that of spirits—  
another



another and very different one. But concerning this let every one determine as to himself seemeth best : it is certain, however, that no universal principle of individuation has ever yet been discovered.

SECT. XXXV. I have now, I conceive, in some measure accomplished the design of this Essay, to wit, to shew that the same consciousness is not the real constituent of PERSONAL IDENTITY ; and—to demonstrate what is.—No-thing remains but to recommend this small treatise to the candid attention of such as shall think it worthy of their perusal. If I have erred, let it be considered, that it is a somewhat arduous attempt, in endeavouring to consider, with precision, a subject replete with difficulty, and, necessarily, requiring accurate and well preserved distinctions. Man, a compound of two the most diverse substances, can scarce consider even a simple Being, without obtruding into the essential idea of it some of his own mixed sensations and feelings ; and whoever attempts sedulously to avoid this, will have also to combat with the same prejudice in others ; a prejudice

dice of all others, the most difficult to be eradicated, as being properly human, and founded on erroneous inferences from our own compounded nature.

These things being considered, if the author of the foregoing sheets has failed in his attempt—let the difficulty of the undertaking atone for the imperfect execution: if, on the contrary, he appears to have been, in any measure, successful, he will esteem it an abundant satisfaction for his labour to have cast the least light on so abstruse, and, at the same time, so important a subject as PERSONAL IDENTITY.

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